

The Athenian Mercury.

Quest. 1. **W**HY does the Rock-fish appear when a Ship is nigh a Rock, and not at other times?

Ans. Because 'tis impossible for 'em to appear to a ship where they are not—'tis their Nature, to lye amongst Rocks, and indeed most Fish lye near Rocks and Shores; We can't believe that when St. Peter walkt upon the water, that he taught the Rock-fish the Doctrine of Bodies being in two places at once; Since the Infallible Apostolick Chair (that pretends a Succession) has known that Hypothesis themselves, but a few Hundred Years.

Qu. 2. Why Carps breed more in Ponds than Rivers?

Ans. From their heavy dull Nature, who hate Motion so much, that in those Rivers where they are found, they always keep in the stillest places; therefore still places being most agreeable to their Nature, are likewise most agreeable to the Production of their Nature.

Qu. 3. Whether Fornication after a Solemn Contract be not as dissolving as Adultery after Marriage, and whether the Innocent Party upon sufficient Proof and Detection of the Fornication may not be at liberty to Contract again with another, or Marry if they think it fitting?

Ans. We see no reason at all, that after such a Violation of the Contract, it shou'd yet remain Obligatory; for by such an Action the Person Offending is made one Flesh with a third Person, and therefore the Obligation to that is yet stricter, than a bare Promise to the first. 'Twould be very well if our Common Whoremongers wou'd consider what numerous Affinities they Contract, and what Portions they will have with such Relations one day. 'Twas a very true tho' a sad Jest, that a Gentleman put upon a Lady of Pleasure in the late Camp at Hounslow-Heath, He design'd to have a free sort of a Converse with her, but not liking her features (or perhaps from some other reason, tho' that was pretended) he began to draw off, and cool in the prosecution of the Amour. What Sir, (said she) Are ye afraid of the softer Sex? Indeed Madam (reply'd he) I'm afraid I shou'd be a kin to a most every Officer in the Camp, and some of 'em are such as I don't care for having any Relation with. As to the latter part of the Question, Whether the Innocent Person may be at Liberty to contract again— we Answer, yes; for what is undone in one sense, is as not done at all; nay, the Liberty is much greater here than the Law will give in the Case of Marriage; for a Divorce is from Bed and Board, is not void in respect of the Marriage; so as that the injur'd may Marry again, but here the Law has nothing at all to do, and Persons may act according to their Conscience and the Law of God, which will warrant a Dissolution of the Contract on one side, when the other is violated as much as it possibly can be.

Qu. 4. Why have red hair'd People the whitest Skins?

Ans. White is no Colour at all, as is Evident by the melting of Snow; for if Snow were a Colour, it wou'd be the same when it melts; So that 'tis only an accident of Dilations, for all Liquid Bodies, nay even Ink it self when dilated or froth'd up, appears white. Again, Red is the most Imperfect of all Colours, for every one knows that has but little Converse with red-hair'd People, that their hair is sooner changed into White than other Peoples. 'Tis so in things that are dyed Red, as Ribbons, &c. it soonest fades and resolves again into White, which will imbrace all Colours it self; so that the first Question is unnatural, and ought to have been thus, Why have the whitest Skin'd People the reddest hair; and the Answer wou'd have been, Because Red is the faintest Colour and nearest to White, and every one knows that 'tis most Natural for like and like go together. If it be further ask'd, Why some Persons have whiter Skins than others; we answer, from several Reasons, viz. from the Mothers Imagination, from Hereditariness, &c. but the truest and first Reason was a Delicacy and tenderness of Temper; Thus the Spanish Nobility, (who upon the Moors Incurfions retir'd to the Mountains and mingled not with the Moors, as did the Commonalty) are of such a delicate Complexion, that both their Skins and their Hair are White, and the roughest temper'd Persons amongst 'em (that have not mixt with black inferior Families) have got into no far-

ther Colours from White, than Yellow or Red, and every one that has consulted History, are not unacquainted with the tenderness of their Education and Constitutions.

Qu. 5. Why Crooked People are for the most part very good Condition'd, or very bad?

Ans. The Question had been more proper thus, Why are Crooked People commonly the most Ingenious; Perhaps, because Nature for her deficiency in one thing, wou'd make amends. Thus the blind have good Memories, the deform'd are witty, &c. According to the Poet,

Nature took Pains
To change a beauteous Lump for stock of Brains.

But to the present Question, the Supposition is false, Deform'd Persons are but few, and therefore more remarkable. Just so some Persons will say, a cut Finger is hit oftner than the rest, which is an Error; for when the rest are hit, there's no notice taken of it, because they are not hurt; but when the cut Finger is hit, be sure the Pain causes a remembrance, and makes it remarkable.

Qu. 6. What's the most profitable, easie, and pleasant Trade?

Ans. The first bids fair wherever it is, for the Company of the other two perhaps a Merchants calling Answers the Question.

Qu. 7. What's the best Antidote against Fear?

Ans. Good Nurfes are the first, who by their forbearance of those Idle Names of Bugbear Ghosts, &c. make no early Impressions upon Childrens Spirits; for Experience gives us Instances too many, of such Persons as cou'd never wear those thoughts off as long as they liv'd, but a Person is come of a timorous fearful Family, there's yet better measures to be us'd, and such as won't fail; Let 'em imbrace early Principles of Religious Vertue, and then they will be Arm'd against all the little Attacks of Fear & Timidity; But there's yet another Moral Essay, which seldom fails, to wit, Custom and Use to Dangers, it will harden the greatest fool of a Coward in the World, for the reason of Fear is an Erroneous Judgment, that makes dismal black representations of things which are not so in their own Nature, but in the fancy representing, and when a Person tries, and finds all his Fears groundless, he begins to take Courage; and laugh at his old fictitious Chymera's.

Qu. 8. What will make Persons wakeful that are given to sleep?

Ans. Sleepiness is sometimes to such a measure that 'tis a Disease; so that proper Physick ought to regulate the Constitution. But perhaps the intent of the Querist may be, What will keep a person awake; to pass by Disturbances, and the Customs of such Philosophers as slept with a Ball in their hand over a Basin, that when it dropt they might awake, we shall mention a nearer Instance. A very Eminent Person at Oxford, having a certain Book to finish for the Press, and but a little time to do it in, sends in the Evening for one of his own Dishes of Coffee, which held above a Pint, and secures a Quart more for the Night time, he study'd all Night, and by Morning had spent his Coffee, and found himself wakeful enough to prosecute the Work he had in hand, and this Method he follow'd (as I take it) for three Days and three Nights, and finishes what he had to do; whereupon he order'd his Bed to be ready, and said he wou'd go to sleep, but lying down he cou'd not sleep, whereupon the Doctors were sent for, and understanding the Occasion, they order'd him to Bleed presently, gave him Opiates and other things, whereby they cast him into a Sleep, which was no short one; but they all concluded, that if he'd wak'd but a few hours longer, he had never slept any other, but his last Sleep having drank of that wakeful Liquor to such a great Excess.

Qu. 9. Whether a Rook eats Carrion or no?

Ans. The Querist has been very angry with us that we have not yet answer'd his demands; but for such useless Questions as this, we must let 'em alone till their turn comes, those that follow the Directions laid down in the Preface to the second Volume, may have speedier Answers, for those are the Rules, which we will not deviate from; but

but to the Question, *a Rook does not eat Carrion, the Crows do,* which are only distinguished by their Bills, a Rooks being white, a Crows black; the Crows lived well enough in the great Frost (about 7 or 8 years since) so many things Dying for them to feed upon; but Rooks were observ'd, tho many famish'd and pinch'd to Death by hunger, not to alter their feeding, such as Grass and Weeds in Springs, Corn, Hay-seeds, &c. found where Beasts were fodder'd, for there were no Worms at all for 'em, which is the nearest Dyet to Carrion that ever they are observ'd to Eat.

Quest. 10. *Why the hair of ones Beard grows grey sooner than the hair of a Mans Head.*

Ans. From the diversity of the Quantity of the Moisture that maintains both, the Brain affords much, and has but a little way to send it forth, there being but little flesh upon the Skull, but about the Face there's a great deal more flesh—and also more constringent and close than the rest of the Head, and therefore the Excrescences are not so easily emitted nor so well fed, and hence it is that they also decay the sooner, by degenerating into white.

Qu. 11. *Since in breeding Horses your Skillful Jockeys by their care and choice of the best, both as to Temper, Mital, Stature, &c. come into a good race of Horse flesh, Whether might there not be also a good race of Men (if care was taken as their Generation) both as to Soldiers, Gownmen, Politicians, Mechanics, &c.*

Ans. This is a merry sort of a Question at first sight, and not to be despis'd neither for the Comparison; It admits of a Positive Answer, that an Unmixt Generation of the best Soldiers, might in a few Ages set upon a second Conquest of the World, and so of the rest; for Customs and Habits have a mighty influence upon Humane Nature; but yet to be ty'd up and bound in deeper Obligations than God and Nature have already limited, wou'd look Tyrannical, and Man having not free Liberty to choose an agreeable Converse further than Generation, it wou'd argue his Mind and better part of little Use, the most that cou'd be pretended, wou'd be a Subordination and Subjection to that dull silly thing the Body; so that by such an Alteration of our Liberty, we shou'd by seeking a Perfection of Bodies, lose the Bravery and Nobleness of the Mind, which all wise Men will conclude a very unhappy Exchange.

Quest. 12. *Whether Devils can Generate, and what are we to think of such Stories as that of Merlin; who, as is reported, was begot betwixt the Devil and his Mother.*

Ans. We ought to believe no such a thing, for there's the greatest Impossibility in't, of any thing that can be propos'd in Nature, as we shall make appear by and by, but for the diversion of the Reader, we'll tell him what strange things of this Nature have been deliver'd in History.—To omit the Births of Hercules, Aeneas, Alexander, Servius, Tully, and many other Heroes, which some Poets wou'd have us believe were begotten by the Gods, or rather Devils, under the Names of Parr. Incubi, Fauni; nay, the Hebrews themselves have their share in this Opinion with some of the Fathers, from that passage in Genesis, and the Sons of God went into the Daughters of Men. The Prince of the Incubi, the Hebrews call Haza, and the Chief of the Succubus, Libith.—In Poland, Princes of the race of the Jagelloes issued from a Succubus, in the Form of a Bear. In Poitou, Counts are begot of a Succuba, half Woman and half Serpent. In Hungary, Intire Nations called Huns, born of of the Arluns, Gathick Witches and Fauni. Even at this day in the Island of Hispaniola (by the Relation of Chieza in his History of Peru) a Demon called by the Inhabitants of Corocota, hath to do with the Women, and the Children proceeding from such Conjunction have borns, as also among the Turks those People whom they call Nephisulians, are believed to be generated by the Operation of Devils. Those who believe such Relations, argue for 'em after this manner, The Devil performs the Natural actions of Animals by means Supernatural, as he sees without Eyes, moves Bodies without Contact, Transports himself from one place to another without Commensuration of the Intermediate space, because he hath no Quantity (so say they) he may get a perfect Animal without observing the Conditions of ordinary Agents. To which, and all the rest we answer, That (by Gods Permission, for without that nothing can be done) the Devil has Power to move all Bodies from one place to another, and can by that means form a Body of Air or some other Gross; nay further, he can (if permitted) take a Body lately Dead, Animate it with an adventitious heat and give such Motions as he Pleases to all its parts: But all this won't do, for (Naturalists tel us) there are three things without which 'tis impossible there can be Generation, Distinction of Sex, Copulation of Male and Female, and Emission of some prolific

matter, containing in itself a virtue to form all the Parts from whence it issued. The Devil may indeed make the Two first Conditions meet, as is Evident by the Confession of several Witches that have been Executed, who declared, that the Devil had carnal Knowledge of 'em after the manner of Men. But the latter requisite is absolutely out of the Devils Power, namely, a fit and convenient Seed indeed with Spirits and Vital heat, without which the act must be unfruitful and barren; for he hath no such Seed of his own, because it is the result of the last Concoction, which cannot be made but in a Body actually alive; Nor can he borrow such Seed elsewhere, because it becomes unfruitful when once shed out of the Vessels of Nature, by reason of the Evaporation of its Spirits. It must be an act of the Natural faculty and the Vegetative Soul, which cannot be appropriated to the Devil, who is a pure Spirit, not composed of Matter.

Qu. 13. *In order to reclaim some Erring Friends, who out of vanity, dislike the establish'd way of the Ch. of Engl. though they can't produce one plain or positive Proof, either from Scripture, or True Reason, to demonstrate any part thereof to be truly sinful, or wicked, only they like one way better than another; I wou'd desire your Sentiments, whether Schism (which is an Antichristian division, or Separation among the Members of the true Church, where both sides profess all the same necessary and Fundamental Points) being certainly a Sin, as being contrary to that universal love and union so frequently command'd, Whether (I say) this Schism will be justified, or excus'd in the day of Judgment, by the Law of Toleration?*

Ans. As our Law design'd to Patronize no Vice here, so it won't excuse any hereafter: It's intention is good, but if persons make use of it to ill ends, they will be answerable for it at the day of Judgment: Schisms will be, whether the Law is silent or not; they were before Toleration for Liberty of Conscience, and they are no more now, but less: that long unhappy Separation betwixt the Church of England and Presbyterians, being nearer an universal accommodation than ever they were under Restrictions and Penalties.

Quest. 14. *Suppose a Man shall make an Agreement with a Rich Dealer, which agreement is afterwards put into Writing, prepared by the said Dealer, and seeming to be according to the Agreement: Both Parties Sign and Seal it: Afterwards this Dealer consulting a Cunning Lawyer, is advis'd, that he may avoid the true intent and meaning of the Agreement (at least in the Sense they both knew was meant by it) to the others damage, for Relief herein he sues. But if the said Dealer by his Purse, or Cunning, shall obtain the Sentence of the Court in favour of him, Query, whether this defrauding a Circumvention is pardonable, by a bare Repentance, without Restitution?*

Ans. No; Restitution in Case of Injury to our Neighbours, where the thing is possible, is the only demonstration of the Sincerity of such Repentance: Nay further, without a Resolution, as possible to make Satisfaction to the Injur'd, there can be no actual Repentance, either for that, or other Sins. For to say, I repent of Injuring my Neighbour, and continue that Injury, by Non-restitution, is a Contradiction, and one habit of sin is as certainly Damnable as ten: The Accessary is under the same Circumstances, and his duty is, as by his Advice he caus'd such a Cheat, so by his Advice he ought to cause a Restitution, or at least do all that lies in his power in order to Restitution.

Qu. 15. *Two persons solemnly Contracted that neither should marry any other person as long as they were both living; now one of the persons is since married to another, pray your answer whether the Contract is not void, and the person that is unmarried may not (by the Laws of God) enter into the Bonds of Matrimony?*

Ans.—Yes certainly, for Obligations always imply a Condition. I cannot bargain with persons whether they will or no, nor am I oblig'd where an Obligation is void on the other hand; as in this Instance, I give my Esteem, Love, &c. for yours, my Obligation is only to you, but you disown, and cancel it by taking away the Condition on your part, and if cancell'd, I am at liberty again.—But let the first Aggressors of such Vows take heed what they do, for they will certainly be met with either here or hereafter.—If it be objected the Obligation was rash, unadvised, &c. we answer, Care shou'd have been taken before-hand in matters of so great consequence.

Quest. 16. *What is Solidity?*

Ans. A close connexion of Material particulars, usually speaking; but in strictness of speech 'tis a Continuity of Matter, as Glass and all Diaphanous or Transparent Bodies.